

Working Draft

Mandatory Training Requirements:

Question #2: Mandatory training days and how many hours are truly needed for mandatory requirements?

BLUF: Reducing AR 350-1 mandatory training requirements and authorizing greater latitude for commander discretion in achieving mandatory training requirements will help optimize training resources and time available for collective training. NCFA interviews with Army leaders during multiple site visits repeatedly identified a high degree of dissatisfaction within all three Army Components with the amount of mandatory training required by AR 350-1. This friction point has been a topic of critical concern with The Army Reserve Force Policy Committee (ARFPC) and was also a major topic of the 2014 and 2015 Army Training and Leader Development Conference (ATLDC). Army leadership recognizes this problem and the Army G3 is working on solutions as they develop a new AR 350-1. The goal is to reduce the number of tasks, the time for each task, and allow commanders more latitude in prioritizing what must be completed. However, this is not a new issue as the taskers generated during the previous (2014) ATLDC identified AR 350-1 revision as a major issue. .

There is a widely held perception in the Army that the AR 350-1 mandatory training requirements, when taken in total, add up to an unreasonable burden in terms of the time needed to complete all requirements. This is especially true in the RC. The ARFPC has addressed this mandatory training issue as a critically important problem for the past two years. The RC community generally argues that it takes 31 of their 39 training days to complete all of these requirements. That figure has not been confirmed, but 31 days is generally used in the NGB and USAR training and planning communities. The ARFPC uses the figure of 24 Unit Training Assembly periods (UTAs) required to meet these requirements, which equates to 24 days. Whether the figure is 24 days or up to 31 days, that is still a very significant requirement for RC units spent on training below the unit collective level. RC leaders are near unanimous with their assessment that AR 350-1 training requirements leave very little time to conduct collective training or to focus the training where Commanders assess their units need the most training.

There are fewer complaints about mandated theater or mission-specific training. Most object to the on-line or auditorium-style training that many Soldiers refer to as “check the block” training. While the long list of mandatory training requirements stems from incremental additions due to needs assessed across time, the aggregate impact provides a significant time burden while making it difficult to select unnecessary tasks. The Army historically focuses training on known severe problem areas with practical and political dynamics. Examples include Suicide Prevention; Sexual Harassment, Assault, Response & Prevention (SHARP); Equal Opportunity; Army Values; Combatting Trafficking in Persons; Code of Conduct; Ethics, and Substance Abuse Training. Other tasks, such as Anti-Terrorism; Information Security; Threat Awareness Reporting Program; Law of War; Disease and Injury Prevention; Information Assurance, and Operations Security are more operational in nature. These and mandatory training requirements

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for all Army personnel add up to a debilitating time requirement for the RC and, to a lesser extent, for the AC.

The 2015 ATLDC addressed this issue. The minutes, produced by DAMO-TR, described the problem of mandatory training requirements. Training requirements in AR 350-1 are poorly described or managed and are a constant source of friction. The desired end state is the reduction of mandatory training requirements and enabling of commanders to appropriately balance training readiness with other Army requirements. The CSA acknowledged that there are too many training requirements for Reserve Component forces. He commented that he was surprised at the number of Army directives, regulation, pamphlets and messages (over 1000 of them) that have to do with this issue. His guidance was to underwrite risk and give lower level commanders flexibility. Corps and Division commanders must have the ability to prioritize these requirements. He acknowledged the Army will always have mandatory training requirements, but must find a better approach. After validating new requirements, delegating mandatory training exception approval means commanders will assume the risk and Department of the Army must protect those commanders. Some of the main decisions to find solutions at the 2015 ATLDC were:

- Delegate mandatory training exception approval to 2-star commanders or SES equivalents.
- Rewrite AR 350-1.
- Designate HQDA G-3/5/7 as the approval authority for directing Army mandatory training requirements and create a process for the review and direction of all mandatory training requirements.
- Establish DA PAM 350-1XX as the consolidated repository for Army training requirements.
- Abandon 100% individual training record accountability for mandatory training unless required by Statute or DOD Instructions.
- Establish a bi-annual requirement instead of annual for RC.
- Direct Army Service Component Commands to coordinate with Combatant Commanders to reduce COCOM pre-mobilization requirements where possible.
- Adopt standards for mandatory training that establish task, condition and standard and mandate leaders and Subject Matter Experts to conduct training.
- Streamline pre-deployment training requirements.
- Remove time requirements and focus on training outcomes.

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Conclusions and Proposals: The Army has identified the problem of excessive mandatory training requirements found in AR 350-1. Army has not completed solutions for multiple years. The following is proposed:

- The Army implements the 2015 ATLDC recommendations by the end of FY 16.
- Review all of the mandatory training requirements with the goal of reducing the number of tasks and time required to complete them.
- Develop a formal process for approving any additional mandatory training tasks and current requirements should be reviewed annually.
- Rewrite AR 350-1.
- Allow commanders more latitude in designing their training programs and reduce the mandatory training requirements while prioritizing those requirements. Commanders will determine whether or not to complete all of these requirements and determine the acceptable level of risk.
- Consolidate related training topics, reduce the frequency of the requirements and eliminate the training time requirements. Change the language from “will” to “may” in the regulation for many of the requirements.
- RC soldiers use the existing Electronics Based Distance Learning (EBDL) system to complete some of the remaining mandatory training requirements on line and offsite. There is a bill and points associated with distance learning requirements for compensation to RC soldiers who are directed to take distance learning training to support missions or unit readiness. EBDL prevents soldiers from sitting at a computer screens completing on-line mandatory training during drill periods and allows more time for collective training and the Commander’s training priorities.